

The Columbus Dispatch

Crafting a community

Take 15 years, 1,350 acres, stir in 2,200 homes, dozens of businesses, parks and other amenities, and you could have Jerome Village

By Mike Pramik

A Columbus developer hopes to create a classic Ohio small town northwest of Dublin in Jerome Township.

Final plans are gelling for Jerome Village, a planned community that will offer housing, offices, retail stores and other amenities on 1,350 acres of farmland.

“Normal development goes along at 80 acres at a clip,” said Scott Mallory, president of Highland Management. “You fit things together in a piecemeal fashion. In a development like this, you can plan so you don’t end up painting yourself in a corner.” Highland purchased about half of the land for the project. It has the remainder under contract.

Highland also has secured the backing of Arena District developer Nationwide Realty Investors for the project, which promises 2,200 rooftops. More than half will be within a 10-minute walk of a town center complete with a police and fire station, a library, a post office, shops and restaurants.

Its backers say Jerome Village is a concept unique to central Ohio that will incorporate antisprawl principles of smart growth, new urbanism and resource conservation.

Highland has submitted a final development plan to the Jerome Township zoning department, and a hearing is scheduled for February. It could reach the township trustees in the spring or summer, trustee Bob Merkle said.

What is Jerome Village?

It could be the new New Albany or at least could resemble

it. Highland plans to create a community-development authority, similar to New Albany’s, in which residents will pay for roads and services such as access to parks and pools.

Mallory said the goal is to create a property-tax obligation similar to that of Dublin. That makes sense because 85 percent of the development is in the Dublin City Schools district.

Jerome Village intends to tap into the Marysville water system and use a Marysville waste-water treatment plant

in Marysville expected to come on line in late 2008.

The use of Marysville’s services will allow Highland to begin building houses next year with the first residents to be in place in 2009. That’s market permitting. The past two years have been slow ones for local homebuilders, so there is a question whether the demand will be there.



Retail and office space in the town center.

Development size

How Jerome Village's acreage stacks up with other developments in central Ohio:

- ▶ New Albany Community Authority – 5,000
- ▶ Rickenbacker Air Industrial Park – 2,000
- ▶ Muirfield – 1,740
- ▶ Jerome Village – 1,350
- ▶ Easton – 1,300
- ▶ Polaris Centers of Commerce – 1,200
- ▶ Ballantrae – 922
- ▶ Pinnacle – 625
- ▶ Tartan Fields – 511
- ▶ Mill Run – 350
- ▶ Arena District – 75

Source: Dispatch research
Left: Town Center



Although he hasn't officially taken a stance on the development, Merkle said he thinks the concept will work.

"Jerome Township is growing whether it's wanted or not," Merkle said. "The interesting uniqueness of Jerome Village is 1,350 acres. The concept is much better than high-density strips along the road."

Jerome Village is quite large as developments go. Easton, for example, covers about the same amount of ground. Jerome Village covers more ground than other large housing developments that have emerged in central Ohio in recent years, such as Ballantrae in Dublin and Pinnacle in Grove City.

With planned retail construction of more than 700,000 square feet, it could even have an effect on recent retail centers in Dublin and Hilliard.

Homes are being designed to start at \$175,000 and top \$1 million. It will include starter homes, mid-level properties, executive housing and retirement condos near the town center.

"You don't have to leave when you get older," Mallory said.

The project's architect, Jim Houk, has developed a design book that will shape residential layouts and appearances. The plan is to create a village that looks as if it were built before World War II.

Unlike New Albany, which has adopted Georgian architecture, Jerome Village will permit nine distinct styles within the categories of classical, Victorian and arts-and-crafts.

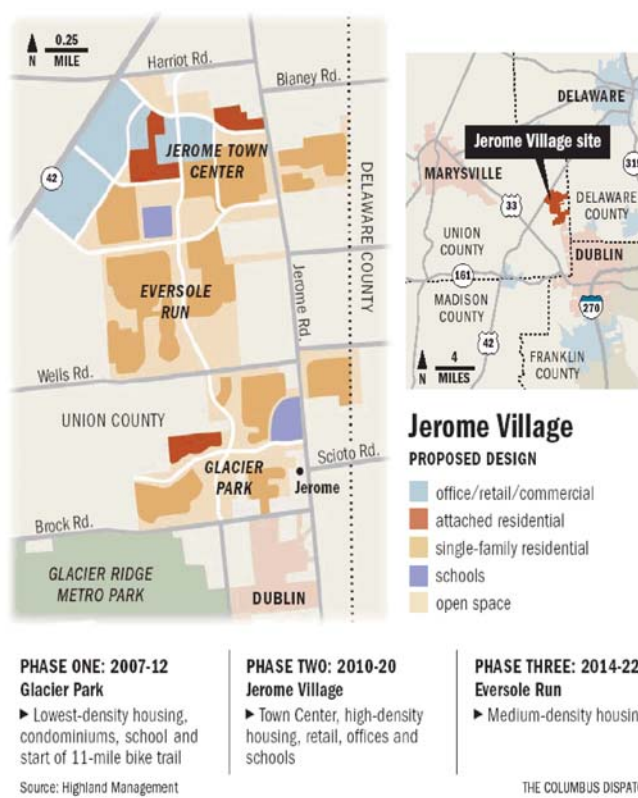
"We want to have a broader mix of styles, but one thing that's unique is to go back to the roots of true architectural rules," Houk said. "Some modern-day builders have mixed a little bit of this with a little bit of that, and what you have is kind of mix-matched."

Houk said that by careful planning, Jerome Village will avoid the pitfalls of some recent projects that have left retail development separated from residences.

"We're really creating a community," said Houk, a principal in Bird Houk Collaborative, a Dublin architectural firm.

Mallory said he thinks it will take most of this year to have Jerome

Village approved. Highland plans to begin infrastructure work next year with the intention of selling its first houses in 2009.



JEROME VILLAGE